Firing by Pakistan along LoC

1512. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistani soldiers have stepped up their activities along the northern sector and fired artillery and mortar shells on Indian positions along the LoC in Kanzalwara and Machal subsectors of Kupwara district in the Kashmir Valley; and

(b) if so, the details of the provocative movements and the steps taken to maintain peace along the LoC?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Firing by Pakistani troops across the LoC is mainly intended to provide cover to infiltrators. The general trend of firing is that it decreases during winter months, when passes become closed due to snow, and with the onset of summer it increases with increased infiltration attempts.

(c) Our troops are maintaining vigil all along the Line of Control and appropriate response is given to Pakistani firing taking due care that the incidents remain localised and our casualty is minimal.

Sanctions from USA

1513. DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of nature of our association with the USA in the area of defence;

(b) how will this be effected because of the impending sanctions from USA; and

(c) what steps are being taken to surmount this difficulty?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) India's relations with USA in the defence sector have encompassed three main streams i.e. bilateral security dialogue between the Ministry of Defence of India and the US Department of Defence, Service-to-Service interaction, and co-operation in defence industry and research and development. A structure has evolved over the last few years including a bilateral Defence Policy Group and, under its guidance, a Joint Technical Group and Service-to-Service Steering Groups.

Consequent upon the underground nuclear explosions undertaken by India on May 11 and 13, 1998 the spokesman of the US Department of Defence announced the cessation of all military exchanges with India.

Government believe that bilateral defence exchanges between US and India have always been based on the principals of mutual benefit and mutual respect. Extraneous linkages of any kind with such co-operation are unacceptable to India.

Joint operation in Andaman Islands

1514. SHRI AMAR SINGH. : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of arms and ammunition intercepted in a joint operation by the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard on February, 1998 in Andaman and Nicobar Islands;

(b) whether Government are aware that this racket had been operating in Andaman Islands since long and if so, what is the main agency behind this racket and whether any arrest has been made in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) In a joint operation carried out by the three Services and the Coast Guard in Andaman & Nicobar Islands in Feb. 98, 73 persons were arrested and 138 weapons including A K series of rifles, rocket launchers, grenade launchers, carbines and about 40,000 rounds of ammunition of different kinds were seized.